


#Africa4Her Generates Support for Women and Girls: Olivier Nathacia, South Africa

We asked some of the many YALI Network members who in March made an [#Africa4Her](#) pledge to invest in women and girls in their community how they have fulfilled that pledge. Here is Olivier Nathacia's story.

Olivier Nathacia wants to close the  opportunity gap for women and girls. (Courtesy of Olivier Nathacia)

I have pledged to invest my time, knowledge and the other resources accessible to me to improve and empower the lives of women and girls within my community.


As a young woman residing in South Africa, I noticed that there is a gap regarding support of women's development and growth. Women are still sidelined, especially those residing in less privileged areas.

I also experienced the challenges that most young women and girls come across, especially in the corporate and business arenas. I realized that women are still severely hampered by discrimination, lack of resources and economic opportunities, limited access to decision-making and gender-based violence.

I volunteered because I want to be that ripple of change that will close the gap and become part of a generation that makes a difference — a generation that changes obscure obstacles within society about women and girls through entrepreneurship, public innovation and leadership.

I have learned that service is important. More especially when you work with the community, you need to know how to serve people, communicate with them, have time for them, show them that you care. Most of all I learned what it means to be disciplined and be a people's person.

Through volunteering, I learned that leadership is not for the faint-hearted. I have learned what it means to connect and how to build a network that will transform this nation.

Olivier Nathacia, left, with two  of the women she helps through her community volunteer work. (Courtesy of Olivier Nathacia)

Most importantly, I learned that women and girls are strong leaders by nature — they thrive in every situation or circumstance. They vouch for justice, yet they need support in order to achieve whatever they want to accomplish in life. They need a platform to share their knowledge, to network and build each other up.

This experience through #Africa4Her has made me a creative leader and inspired me to continue

with the journey I have embarked on.

I can now connect and communicate better. Being amongst women and girls all the time has changed my perception of how women deal and do things from different circumstances of their lives.

Service is important when you work with the community.

On August 28, 2015, we will once again host an event that focuses on young women and girls. The event will be about the importance of exercising and healthy living.

Although it is still hard for me to get all the support I need from government in order to make things happen within my community, I encourage myself to keep going because my passion is assisting young women and girls in every way possible.

More than 1,000 YALI Network members made an [#Africa4Her](#) pledge. They represent 47 countries, and 54 percent of them are men. If you made an #Africa4Her pledge and would like to share your story, please email us at YALINetwork@state.gov and use the subject line “#Africa4Her.”

[YALI to Carry On, Obama Says](#)

The Young African Leaders Initiative (YALI) will continue to exist even after President Obama leaves the White House in January 2017, the U.S. leader assured excited Mandela Washington Fellows. The 500 fellows were meeting in Washington August 3 for the second annual Presidential Summit.

“When I leave office I will continue to create these platforms for young leaders,” he said, noting that he has started similar leadership programs for young Asian and Latin American leaders. He encouraged the fellows and the 140,000 other members of the YALI Network to expand their own networks worldwide. “You can learn from every place,” he said.

Speaking to YALI Network members who tuned into his speech via livestream and Twitter, he said, “I’m proud of you all. And I’m proud of the progress we’ve made.”

Obama also confirmed that in 2016 the Mandela Washington Fellowship will double in size to include 1,000 young African leaders.

Expanding Opportunities

The president, who the fellows greeted by singing “Happy Birthday,” said that YALI will expand next year to include an opportunity for 80 young American leaders to travel to and learn from Africa. The expansion reflects a wish that Mandela Washington Fellow and YALI Network member Fatou Ba Ndiour of Senegal posed to him in a letter: that the program also send young Americans to Africa “Not to help poor communities as they usually do. But to learn from other societies,” she explained.

The president also talked about the more than 30 YALI Network Online Courses on topics such as public speaking and how to write a business plan. He added that YALI Network members now have access to three [new online Mandela Washington Fellowship Institute Courses](#) “so that all members of the YALI Network can access some of the great ideas [the Fellows] have been sharing.”

In addition to these online resources, Obama also announced the opening of the YALI Regional Leadership Center in Accra. That center and one in Nairobi will be joined later this year by centers in Dakar and Pretoria. Already, the U.S. Department of State has committed to opening eight YALI American Spaces.



Claude Grunitzky Discusses Entrepreneurship in Latest #YALICHAT

Last week Claude Grunitzky joined the YALI Network for a three-day #YALICHAT on Facebook about entrepreneurship. Claude Grunitzky, founder of the multinational company TRACE, and instructor of the YALI Network Online Course lessons [Creating a Business Plan](#), [Identifying Your Markets](#) and [Pitching Your Business Ideas for Investment](#) is a successful entrepreneur who knows how to get a new business off the ground.

He answered questions about how to secure funding and what makes a business successful, as well as shared personal experiences he has endured as an entrepreneur. During the three-day chat, Claude engaged with YALI Network members and gave them a better idea of what it takes to be a successful entrepreneur. Here are some highlights.

How to secure funding:



(Claud received many questions about raising capital and securing funding, to see his answer read his blog post at yali.state.gov/how-can-i-secure-funding-for-my-new-business/).

How to balance monetization and product development:



How to identify business partners:



How entrepreneurship helps countries develop:



How to get capital when you are unemployed:



How to find the right mentor:



Why passion is vital to entrepreneurship:




How to determine if your business is successful:



[Join the YALI Network](#) to get updates and join in on future #YALICHATs.

Entrepreneur Counters Community's 'Food Poverty'

Benedicte Mundeke, right, and a neighbor grind food for her canteen. (Courtesy of Benedicte Mundeke) 

"I want young people to change their thinking and not to believe that it is better overseas. In the DRC and Africa there are more opportunities than anywhere." — Benedicte Mundeke, founder of Surprise Tropicale.

Before she was 10 years old, Benedicte Mundeke was making her own money.

Born with a love of healthy food, Mundeke began her culinary career when she was just 7 and her mother allowed her to set up a fresh juice stand outside her mother's restaurant in Boma in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Every year, the young entrepreneur's biggest day for business was June 30, Congo's Independence Day. Holiday customers on their way to the restaurant flocked to her stand to buy fruit juice and to support her initiative.

In secondary school, Mundeke nourished her interests first at the Elynd Institute in Kinshasa, which had a culinary course, then at the Lycée Technique et Professionnel de Kimbondo, which offered a culinary and hotel program.

When she was 16, she joined the Kuvuna Foundation, which her father led. The foundation trains young Congolese in leadership and entrepreneurship. "I was always dreaming to one day have a big business in the food industry," she says.

She started Surprise Tropicale, which turns locally grown tropical foods into juices and chips while promoting healthy lifestyles. The company began a canteen service that serves healthy breakfasts to Kuvuna Foundation members.

"The food poverty in my country inspired my project," she says. "We have many raw products in my

country — coconut, plantain, potato, ginger, passion fruit, papaya and pineapple among others — but not enough food. You go to the supermarket and everything is imported from another country. They take the fruit and vegetables grown here and transform it into a product, often with added preservatives, and then import it back to our country for more expensive prices” that many can’t afford. That leads to malnutrition, Mundeles explains.

As her business grew, Mundeles learned about the food industry, farming, business, the logistics of food delivery and customer preferences. Initially, customers didn’t trust locally produced food or food products. She says that another challenge was convincing customers to adopt a healthy lifestyle. Still another challenge was acquiring all of the appropriate food processing equipment.

Mundeles also supplies produce to nearby shops and runs her own take-away. The venture makes around \$300 a month. Mundeles plans to supply local supermarkets, develop a network of farmer-suppliers, and open outlets in Kinshasa and in other communities in Congo.

Mundeles says her parents always encouraged her “to believe that I could succeed in what I love doing.” She credits her teachers with giving her guidance about the food industry and staff at the Kuvuna Foundation and African Leadership Academy in South Africa with providing her with the books and other information resources she needed to start a business.

“Most of all, I grew my business by developing a ‘Just do it’ attitude,” she exclaims. She next wants to learn more about food transformation and conservation.

Mundeles shares the spirit of support by mentoring young women entrepreneurs and volunteering to assist underprivileged girls in Kinshasa. She serves as curator of the Global Shapers Hub in Kinshasa, part of a global network of youth-led groups initiated by the World Economic Forum, and is vice president of the Dynamic Women group at Catholic University of Congo.

Mundeles’s entrepreneurial vision and efforts led to her selection as a 2014 finalist for the Anzisha Prize, a competition that recognizes African entrepreneurs ages 15-22 who bring positive change to their community. The prize is sponsored by the African Leadership Academy and the MasterCard Foundation. In 2015, the World Economic Forum named Mundeles one of three young women who are using entrepreneurship to solve problems in Africa.

“I want young people to change their thinking and not to believe that it is better overseas. In the DRC and Africa there are more opportunities than anywhere else,” Mundeles says.

"We Have to Adapt to Change"



"We have to adapt to change as quickly as possible. Those who adapt to change are those who are going to survive." — Julian Kyula

Julian Kyula, 39, founded and runs Mobile Decisioning Africa (MoDe) in Nairobi. The company, launched in 2010, holds a niche in the mobile money market — nanofinance.

Kyula describes nanofinance as the lending of very small amounts of money, say 20 dollars or pounds. "At any time of the day, someone in the world is in desperate need of a very small amount of money," says Kyula, whose expertise is in business development. He says the concept of nanofinance "started in Africa, then came out to the world. Most of the time it's the other way around."

"Our aim is to make sure that those that don't necessarily have banks or banking relationships, or even if they do, are able to access minimum amounts of cash," he explains. Having expanded the business to nearly 20 markets, Kyula wants to make MoDe a global company.

Kyula suggests that given the current environment of constant change, entrepreneurs should experiment with new concepts. He thinks that students and entrepreneurs should try out new ideas and concepts. "Change is the only constant thing in life."

"Dealing with the dynamics of a startup is a challenge," he says. Yet he acknowledges that it is also rewarding. "It's an amazing thing to create [a venture] because you are experimenting."

The entrepreneur, who left business school before graduating, embraces failure as a learning tool. "Everyone has failure," he notes. "Build resilience. You have to bounce back."

Asked if he encountered hurdles in building his business, Kyula says: "It was very tough. We learned some very major lessons," like finding people with the right skills.

"You've got to make sure that you customize yourself for the region that you are in and be very smart in business," he adds. "People would start to ask, 'Are you really capable of carrying out such a business?' We were lucky to demystify those concerns through large companies we were already working with."

Kyula, who founded Quest Holdings before starting MoDe, advises young people to immediately put their ideas to work.

"Don't wait 10 or 15 years after school to start your dream. ... Go for it. Don't let money stop you. Don't let anything stop you. If you can create and innovate, money will find you."

**[Are you an entrepreneur seeking capital?
Read this.](#)**

By: Andreas Zeller

Over the past five years, more than \$1 billion in fresh capital has been allocated to invest in Small and Growing Businesses (SGBs) in East Africa alone. More than 100 investment funds manage these resources, actively seeking businesses to support that make an impact.

Unfortunately, only a fraction of this capital has been deployed so far. According to investors, this is not for lack of exciting entrepreneurs with great ideas. The problem is that most of these entrepreneurs are not “investment ready.”

At Open Capital, we’ve spent five years helping entrepreneurs prepare for investment. In this post, we want to share some of the most important, yet overlooked, requirements we hear from Africa-focused SGB investors. As an entrepreneur seeking capital, make sure to ask yourself these tough questions before approaching investors. It will make it all the more likely you are successful.

Planning execution

Nearly every entrepreneur we’ve met has an impressive growth plan showing how far they could grow in a few years – it’s often exponential! That’s important, but not helpful for savvy investors unless it’s combined with a clear plan of how you will get your business to reach those goals. If you project to sell your new software to millions of African consumers, make sure you also plan what the first 100 days of operations will look like after you receive investor capital. Be ready to answer questions like: Who will you hire? If you produce products, how will you distribute them to reach your consumers? How will you overcome logistical challenges in Africa?

Prioritizing opportunities

In most African markets, opportunities abound, and it’s easy to want to do it all. But savvy investors understand the value of focus, given how critical execution is to business success, especially in Africa. When you present your business to an investor, make sure you clearly explain what opportunities you will pursue today, and what opportunities you’ll be better positioned for later.

Proving commitment

Investors realize not all entrepreneurs have a lot of money. But they want to know that business founders are intensely committed to their venture and won’t move on to the next new thing when they hit hurdles, as all entrepreneurs do. As an entrepreneur seeking capital, try to gather evidence for investors to show how committed you are in your venture. Even if you haven’t put in much money, if it’s a large percentage of your total savings, it’s still significant! If you’ve committed years of research or sacrificed other opportunities, make sure to point that out.

Demonstrating transparency

Not all entrepreneurs are scrupulous, and many investors have had bad experiences in the past. To prove you’re different, demonstrate how you’ve accounted for your business’ cash flows and explain how you intend to do this in the future. Set clear milestones for your growth plans and offer to send investors frequent reports of your progress toward these goals. Offer to “stage” [ask for in separate stages] the capital you require over time and agree to preconditions that you will meet before requesting each next investment.

Andreas Zeller is Managing Partner at Open Capital Advisors, an organization that provides advisory

services to help high-potential businesses streamline their operations and plan for growth and capital raising. Before joining Open Capital, Andreas worked for Citigroup and Credit Suisse as an investment banker as well as the IFC making investments in frontier markets. He also has experience in the technology startup world. You can learn more about him and his organization by visiting [Open Capital's website](#).

How Can I Secure Funding for My New Business?

By Claude Grunitzky

As I spend more and more time mentoring young entrepreneurs all over Africa — and on other continents — I get asked a lot of questions. Most of the questions relate to funding. Young entrepreneurs — and also older entrepreneurs — are always wondering how they should go about raising money for their company. After all, it is very difficult to grow a company when financial resources are lacking. An entrepreneur needs money to pay staff, to support marketing expenses, and also to pay regular bills like the rent and electricity.

When I get asked about funding, I usually say that there are two types of funding: debt and equity. Debt is when you take out a loan from friends, family, or the bank. Equity is when you get someone to invest in your company in exchange for a share (equity) in the company. My recommendation is to save money (as much money as possible) before you start a business and fund the startup expenses with your personal savings. So if the business fails, then you only have yourself (or the market) to blame. And at least you haven't wasted anyone else's money.

If you have no personal savings, then the next best option is a loan from friends and family. In that case, you will need to explain, in the clearest way, your business idea. And see if your friends and family believe in the idea — and in you — enough to take that risk. If no one, and I mean absolutely no one, wants to lend you money, then you may want to reconsider the venture and question the greatness of your idea, or of your own persuasion skills. That is usually not a good start. And you would be mistaken to expect that a bank will lend you money when your own friends and family are unwilling to part with their cash.

When you are launching a new business, the best kind of money, in my opinion, is equity. If you are able to convince an investor to release funds in exchange for shares in your company, then you have someone who believes in you, someone who is willing to take a big risk on you and the venture. What kind of risk am I talking about? Well, for the investor (or investors) the risk is that they might lose all their money, and their shares would be worthless if the company failed. Many investors are willing to take such a risk, but there are a few things a budding entrepreneur needs to know before heading down the equity road.



First, the entrepreneur will need to practice the “pitch” and articulate the new company’s value proposition in just a few simple sentences. In doing this, it is important to break the value proposition into actual market value so that the new company appears to be unique in what it is offering. There is absolutely no reason to start a new company if you intend to do the same thing other companies are already doing.


Most investors will want to know if the new company’s value proposition is truly unique. This means they will want to know if the company can create — and sustain — what is called a “competitive advantage.” Before approaching an investor, every entrepreneur should look in the mirror and ask himself the following question: “Why would my target customer pay for my product (or service)? How much value does my product (or service) create for her (or him)?” This honest exercise helps the entrepreneur to think about competition, and how he intends to differentiate himself. Who do we want to compete with? Why? Where are they strong? Where are they weak? Why will some of their customers choose us, instead of them?

If the investor likes the idea and the core team, and is convinced of the value proposition and of the new company’s ability to stand out in the marketplace, then they will want to know more about how the company intends to compete. This is when the entrepreneur should be prepared for the toughest questions, the ones that relate to the ability to consistently satisfy customers who are in the target market.

[In my upcoming #YALICHAT](#), I will help young entrepreneurs prepare for the tough questions. Answering questions honestly (and precisely) is a key to securing funding for your business.

Claude Grunitzky is the founder of TRACE, the first multinational media company focused exclusively on producing, aggregating, distributing and promoting urban music and culture via digital media and special events around the world, and a co-founder of TRUE, a new MIT-incubated media venture. He also teaches YALI Network Online Course lessons on [Creating a Business Plan](#), [Identifying Your Markets](#) and [Pitching Your Business Ideas for Investment](#).

Promoting Yourself: Why You Have to Do It and How to Do It Well

An entrepreneur promotes his new smartphone at the 2014 DEMO Conference in San Jose, California. (Stephen Brashear) 

This post was adapted from [a presentation](#) by Rhett Power, an entrepreneur and leadership expert. To learn more about Rhett, visit his website at [RhettPower.com](#).

If you look at the most successful people in any field, you'll almost always see someone incredibly talented in the art of self-promotion. I speak with lots of professionals and often they say, "I don't have to be bothered with selling myself. I'll let my record do that."

The problem is that only people familiar with your story understand your skill set. For the rest of the world, you have to do some purposeful marketing. The fact is that marketing is required in today's business world. You wouldn't create an awesome product and never advertise it. Apply that same logic to yourself. You have to promote yourself, your ideas, your accomplishments and your business today to get ahead.

Ready to get started? Follow these steps:

- **Be confident in yourself.** If you aren't inspired by your actions or ideas, no one else will be either.
- **Determine your unique value.** Understand what makes you different than your peers: your strengths, your passions and your goals. If you left your job today, what would your company and colleagues miss?
- **Update your CV.** Ensure that your resume accurately reflects who you are and is in line with both your short-term and long-term goals. If you need help defining your goals, check out the YALI Network lesson [Setting and Achieving Goals](#).
- **Build a network.** Set up accounts at social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn. Ask those in your target audience to subscribe to your pages and update on a daily basis. Make sure your updates are germane to your business and expertise. Want to improve your networking skills in real life? Take the YALI Network lesson [Networking to Get Ahead](#).
- **Be social.** Change your profile picture and update your work status on all social media. Sell yourself by being current and providing the world with up-to-date information. When possible, find a way to display your personal creed.
- **Create your own website.** Your website should highlight your professional accomplishments and skills while reflecting your beliefs and overall value. Make it about you — not your company or clients. Learn to talk about yourself and become comfortable telling your story.
- **Become a thought leader in your field.** Use a blog or a platform such as LinkedIn to blog about your industry or profession.


Be active in your community. Look for opportunities to join local decisionmaking boards or to speak at local civic clubs. Being visible is the best way to build your audience. Nervous about public speaking? Watch this YALI Network lesson: [The Art of Public Speaking](#).

How to Pitch Your Business Idea

This post was adapted from [a presentation](#) by Rhett Power, an entrepreneur and leadership expert. To learn more about Power, visit his website at RhettPower.com.

So you have a great idea and need some money to start a company? Well, so does the rest of the world! If you're going to get that money, you'll have to have the perfect pitch. For many entrepreneurs, having the perfect pitch is a big challenge, as they struggle to communicate their message to people outside of the business in a clear and comprehensible way. Here's how to nail it:

- **Practice your story** with a timer next to you so you know how much time to spend. It's terrible to be in the middle of your story and then suddenly realize that you have only one minute left to go through four slides. The only way to prevent this is to practice.
- **Watch yourself.** Borrow, rent or buy a video camera and tape your presentation. Watch yourself to see how you can improve. This does miracles for your presentation.
- **Test your story.** Call your mother and explain your story over the phone. If she gets it, you are ready to talk to your investors. If she doesn't get it, go back to the drawing board.
- **Have answers to key questions beforehand.** Who is your audience? What is your marketing plan? How much money do you need? What percentage of your company will you give away for investment? These are all questions investors will ask, and you must be ready to answer them.
- **Don't bluff, lie or make things up.** Other things you shouldn't say: "Our exit strategy is an IPO or acquisition by Google," "We don't have any competitors," and "This is a sure thing."
- **Be prepared for anything.** Travel to your presentation location the day before so you know where it is and you won't get lost. Arrive early and inspect the conference room. Use the restroom before the meeting.
- **Do your homework.** Research each potential investor so you know if they have kids, play football, like to ski and if they are male or female, tall or short, fat or thin and might be interested in your company or not based on earlier investments. Find out what their latest successful deal was and congratulate them on it.

An emerging entrepreneur presents his media company, Vinylmint, at the 2012 DEMO  Conference. (Stephen Brashear)


The purpose of a pitch is to get interest in your business so you can get a second meeting. You won't be able to cover every aspect of your business in the short time you have, so what you do say has to have an impact. Here are some key elements your pitch should have:

- **Problem/Opportunity:** What is the problem you are going to solve? What is the joy you will bring to your customer's life?
- **Value proposition:** How does your product or service solve a problem?
- **Product:** What is the product or service and what makes it magic?
- **Business model:** How will you get your customer to buy this product and how will you then deliver it?

- **Marketing plan:** Who are your customers and how will you reach them?
- **Competitive landscape:** Who are your major competitors? What are they doing? How are you different?
- **Management team:** Who are your people? Why are they the right fit for the company?
- **Financial projections:** What will your company's budget look like for the next three years?
- **Current status:** What have you accomplished so far? How have you used funding to date and how you will use the money you are trying to raise?

Want to know more about pitching? Check out the lesson [Pitching Your Business Ideas for Investment](#), part of the [YALI Network Online Courses](#).

[How to Find Funding for Your Business](#)

Wired for success, this entrepreneur is working on her business at a local incubator.  (iHub)

This post was adapted from [a presentation](#) by Rhett Power, an entrepreneur and leadership expert. To learn more about Rhett, visit his website at [RhettPower.com](#).

One of the most common questions I get from entrepreneurs is how to go about raising funds for a new venture. They often have an idea they love, and maybe a prototype, but no idea how much money they need to raise, where to find the funds or how to even prepare for “the ask.” Here are my tips:

- **Pitch your needs to friends and family.** As a general rule, professional investors will expect that you already have commitments from family and friends to show your credibility. If your friends and family don't believe in you, don't expect outsiders to jump in. This is the primary source of nonpersonal funds for very early stage startups.
- **Join a startup incubator or accelerator.** These organizations are very popular these days and are often associated with major universities, community development organizations and even large companies. Most provide free resources to startups, including office facilities and consulting, and many provide seed funding.
- **Trade equity or services for startup help.** This is most often called bartering your skills or something you have for something you need.
- **Start a [crowdfunding](#) campaign online.** This newest source of funding, where anyone can participate, is exemplified by online sites such as [Kickstarter](#) and [IndieGoGo](#). Here people make online pledges to your startup during a campaign, to pre-buy the product for later delivery, give donations or qualify for a reward, such as a T-shirt.

- **Negotiate an advance from a strategic partner or customer.** Find a major customer, or a complementary business, who sees such value in your idea that they are willing to give you an advance on royalty payments to complete your development.
 - **Solicit venture capital investors.** These are professional investors who invest institutional money in qualified startups, usually with a proven business model that's ready to scale. They typically look for big opportunities, needing a couple of million dollars or more, with a proven team.
 - **Apply to local angel investor groups.** Most metropolitan areas have groups of local high-net-worth individuals interested in supporting startups and willing to invest up to a million dollars or more for qualified startups.
 - **Seek a bank loan or line of credit.** In general, this won't happen for a new startup unless you have a good credit history or existing assets that you are willing to put at risk for collateral.
 - **Fund your startup yourself.** These days, the costs to start a business are at an all-time low, and more than 90 percent of startups are self-funded (also called bootstrapping). It may take a bit longer to save money before you start and grow organically, but the advantage is that you don't have to give up any equity or control. Your business is yours alone.
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